



**The Cost of Keeping  
Communities Safe**

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Budget Briefing

## Foreword

Community safety in the United Kingdom stands at a pivotal moment. Creaking public services, overburdened courts and a crisis in community safety are all features of the United Kingdom. This budget can therefore not come at a more crucial moment, among all the noise that came of this budget, particularly due to the premature release of the budget by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), is often focused on those headline issues, including the two-child benefit cap, the 'mansion' tax and changes to salary sacrifice. However amid all of this noise, there is something to be garnered in regards to what government is affirming about community safety. Casting our attention back to the Spending Review, we saw a number of commitments and omissions from the government, their second budget will lay the framework for what is to be a tense fiscal environment. This briefing has been produced to help our members, partners and stakeholders navigate the fiscal, social and other implications of the 2025 UK Budget. If you have any questions surrounding this report, or just want to get in touch, on any of the issues touched upon, please contact:

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**Resolve ASB**  
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## Key Findings

- **Focus on Frontline Services:** Renewed fiscal commitment for frontline services.
- **Delays in the Criminal Justice System:** Continuing delays in the justice system remain a real concern; the budget focuses on these delays by announcing additional funding.
- **High Streets:** A commitment to tackle the 'hidden economy', addressing modern slavery and ASB linked to high street criminality.
- **Devolution and efficiencies:** Reviewing the role of bureaucracy in the accountability of community safety and a commitment to further devolution.

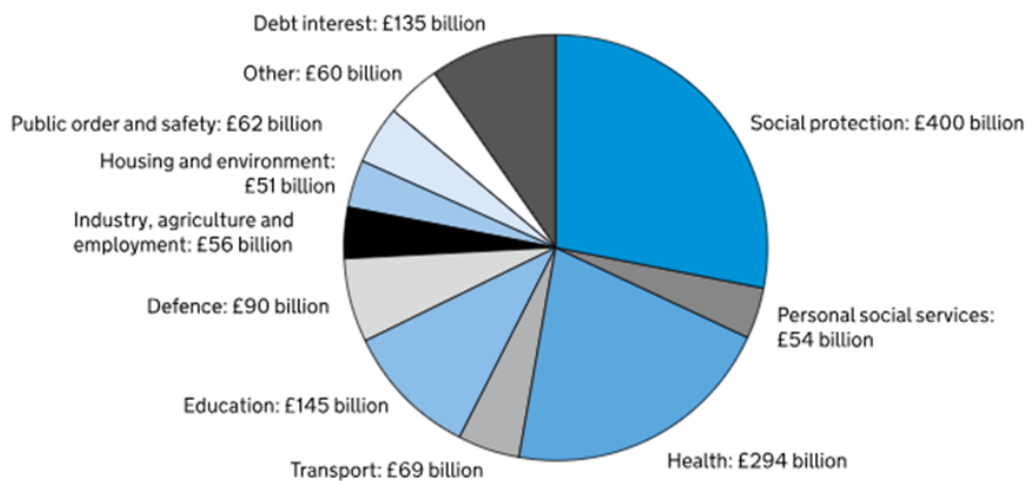


Figure 1: UK Public sector spending 2026-27

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Navigating Fiscal Constraints in Community Safety

This Budget comes at a critical juncture for community safety across the UK. With fiscal constraints tightening, the Chancellor faces difficult choices that will directly impact policing, youth services, victim support, and crime prevention initiatives. Economic pressure often intersects in peculiar ways with public safety, and has done so again in this budget. The headline announcements, prematurely released early by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) are hard to ignore: freezing of the tax thresholds, the 'mansion tax', details around salary sacrifice, lifting of the two child benefit cap and changes to the ISA allowance. However, the accompanying budget policy paper, of which we have dissected for you, revealed some significant fiscal announcements for community safety. We must ask ourselves these key questions going in to the analysis of this budget for community safety:

- **How will court backlogs be addressed?** The court backlogs are reaching insurmountable heights, and we know from our membership, that this is a real challenge to practice.
- **What investment is needed in modern policing?** Is there a renewed commitment to neighbourhood policing, is there any operational changes that aim to save money?
- **How can we balance immediate needs with long-term prevention?** The tension between responding to today's crime challenges and investing in tomorrow's safer communities requires careful fiscal planning.

This Budget will test the government's commitment to **protecting vulnerable populations, supporting law enforcement, and building resilient communities** in an era of constrained resources.

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## **2 The cost of the politics of community safety**

### **2.1 Abolishing Police and Crime Commissioners**

Announced previously, on the 13th of November, the abolishing of Police and Crime Commissioners featured in the government's policy paper on the budget. In an era of tight fiscal expansion and struggling public services, the government faces pressures to make public spending more efficient in an age of extreme aversion and distrust of bureaucracy. The abolishing of Police and Crime Commissioners is aimed at reducing councilor numbers by around 5,000, saving over £250 million over five years. In the initial announcement for this change, at least £20 million was announced to be reinvested every year as a result of efficiencies in police governance, which the government announced was enough for 320 constables.

### **2.2 Administration of PCC powers**

Although not largely in the scope of this report, as it largely covers budget-specific matters, the administration of these powers must also be touched upon. Of course, these roles will now instead be absorbed by regional mayors where possible, and in areas not covered by a mayor, this role will be taken on by elected council leaders. Where mayoral and policing boundaries don't align or a strategic authority hasn't yet been established, PCC powers will instead pass to new policing and boards, made up of upper-tier council leaders and appointed members with relevant expertise. Five mayors are already exercising PCC powers. By 2028, when PCCs are due to be abolished, this is expected to have reached at least 13, covering 15 police force areas. This will still leave most areas (27 police forces) without a mayor with PCC powers. Mayors will also sit on these boards, where relevant.

### **2.3 Community Policing**

Along with the scrutiny of more administrative functions, the government have also committed to funding the provision of 3,000 more neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers in England by the end of March 2026. In a further look at scrutinising public spending, the government have announced a £1 billion reduction in NHS agency spend in 2024-25, and reducing money to consultancy in the Home Office. This funding was announced to be repurposed for frontline police.

## 2.4 Devolution and Community Safety

This will mean that revenue for combined authority and mayor's offices will be crucial and the government seems focused on widening devolution and expanding its influence on English governance. We will cover this later in the report.

- **Money saved and where money is spent** - The touted savings from the abolition of PCCs must be allocated wisely, and if this money is to be saved it is wise to invest it in communities directly, including frontline police.
- **Mayors become part of the community safety landscape** - With the introduction of the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, and now the abolition of PCCs, Mayors are now a central part of the community safety landscape and will continue to be so. We will wait and see how this function develops and how finance is allocated accordingly.
- **How can we balance immediate needs with long-term prevention?** - The tension between responding to today's crime challenges and investing in tomorrow's safer communities requires careful fiscal planning.

The government has insisted that the police boards "will not be a return to the bureaucratic and invisible committee-based oversight of policing that existed before the establishment of PCCs." Dissolving PCC offices and transferring PCC powers to police boards in 2028, only to then transfer them again to elected mayors, will unlikely meet Welsh demands for devolution of police powers. This transition should be consistent and stable in order to satisfy the demands of community safety. Ideally, police forces should align with strategic authority boundaries, once those are agreed. Where a transfer of these powers occurs before these arrangements are in place, key stakeholders should be consulted in order to avoid disruption. New actors in the form of mayoral offices need support and commitment so they can best fulfill their roles as Police and Crime Commissioners.

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## **3 High Streets**

Our High Streets are a key feature of the community safety landscape, with languishing high streets a key concern for many. This was recognised in the budget with some commitments.

### **3.1 Safer Streets?**

There was an affirmation of the concerns of high street businesses and residents around high street businesses. The government announced that through the budget they are establishing a 'dedicated cross-government taskforce to develop an intelligence-led understanding of organised crime on our high-streets'. This High Streets Illegality Taskforce will attempt to disrupt money laundering and related criminality. This coincides with a clamping down of illegal high street activity in premises like mini-marts, barbershops, vape shops, nail bars and car washes. We know from our response to the Tobacco and Vapes Bill call for evidence, that this subversion of trading standards often attracts and sustains criminality, and by extension ASB.

### **3.2 The Hidden Economy**

Often coinciding with the scourge of modern slavery, to which we responded through the identification of the victims of modern slavery consultation. The so-called 'hidden economy' means instances where employers are not meeting obligations to workers, and as a result, causing damage to them and undercutting legitimate businesses. The government announced that they will set up a dedicated 'hidden economy' team within the new Fair Work Agency from April 2026. It was announced that the team will initially target hand car washes, but will then move onto other high-risk areas.

### **3.3 Fair Work Agency**

If a worker complains to the Fair Work Agency, it will follow up with the employer concerned because everyone should have the confidence that the government will listen, and act. And the government will name employers who break the law more regularly. By summer 2026, the government will eliminate the backlog of cases that it inherited from the previous government, and, going forward, all employers who break the law will be named within a year of their case closing. Because people must have confidence that if you break the law, you will be caught and there will be consequences.

## **4 Justice and Courts**

### **4.1 Increased funding**

Our criminal justice system is on the precipice of crisis or change. You only need to read the headlines to see a system with a burgeoning prison population, limited prison places, and a court system routinely faced with insurmountable amounts of backlogs. The SDS40 scheme earlier this year, which saw prisoners released early, was a recognition of the crisis facing our justice system. In the budget, the government would be aware of the challenges faced, and it was not surprising to hear that the criminal justice system faced renewed funding and attention following this budget. Excluding depreciation, the Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) for the ministry of Justice will increase by 9 billion in 2025-26, 6 billion in 2026-27 and 3 billion in 2027-28 and 3 billion in 2028-29. Of course, these figures particularly those further in the future, are subject to change. The headline is that Justice spending will increase; accounting for depreciation over the next few years.

### **4.2 Prisons**

Under the promise of reforming public services to make sure taxpayers' money delivers better outcomes and better value. This means that along with reform sentencing, based on the Independent Sentencing Review, alongside investing £4.7 billion in new prison places between 2026-27 and 2029-30. The government states that this is to help make the justice system more effective.

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## 5 Conclusion

This Budget marks a defining moment for community safety policy in the UK. It reflects an attempt to reconcile fiscal discipline with the urgent need for investment in public protection. The abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners, framed as a cost-saving measure, signals a significant governance shift. Although projected savings and reinvestment into frontline policing are encouraging, the success of this transition will hinge on the capacity of devolved authorities and mayoral offices to maintain accountability and deliver effective oversight.

### 5.1

The commitment to recruit additional neighbourhood police officers and Police Community Support Officers is a positive step toward strengthening visible policing and addressing anti-social behaviour. However, these measures must be considered alongside systemic challenges in the justice system. Court backlogs and prison overcrowding remain critical issues, and while increased funding and plans for new prison places offer some relief, they underscore the scale of reform required to restore confidence in justice delivery.

### 5.2

Equally important is the Budget's recognition of high street vulnerabilities and the hidden economy. Initiatives such as the High Streets Illegality Taskforce and the Fair Work Agency demonstrate a proactive approach to tackling organised crime and exploitation. These measures, if implemented effectively, could disrupt criminal networks and reinforce community resilience. Yet, their success will depend on sustained enforcement and collaboration across agencies.

### 5.3

Ultimately, this Budget highlights the tension between short-term operational priorities and long-term preventative strategies. Although headline commitments to frontline services are welcome, the challenge lies in ensuring that these investments translate into meaningful outcomes for communities. Fiscal prudence must not come at the expense of innovation or early intervention.

# Policy Recommendations

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## 1. Prioritise Prevention and Early Intervention

Allocate savings from governance reforms to early intervention programmes, youth services, and victim support. These investments reduce long-term costs and enhance community resilience.

## 3. Keep ASB and Modern Slavery at the heart of a High Street focus

The fight against high street criminality and exploitation should be linked to broader regeneration efforts, ensuring that enforcement is complemented by economic opportunity. Modern slavery must also be taken into account, as economic criminality often coincides with modern slavery which very often fosters ASB in local areas.

## 2. Make Devolution and Community Safety Work Together

As mayoral offices assume greater responsibility, we must make sure that consultation is present with key stakeholders including housing associations, police and victims themselves in order to connect the growing devolution ambition of the government and the present community safety needs of the public. Where mayoral authorities and strategic authorities

## 4. Monitor and Address Civil Justice Delays

As part of our four key asks for government, we have repeatedly called to address the civil justice delays, which have caused a great deal of difficulty for our members. Increased funding for courts and prisons must be accompanied by measurable targets for reducing backlogs and improving sentencing outcomes.



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